

LOS ANGELES – Today, Mayor Jim Hahn, Representative Xavier Becerra (CA-31) and Carla Sanger, President and Chief Executive Officer of LA's BEST, formally announced the federal allocation of \$2 million for the City of Los Angeles's 15-year old LA's BEST after school enrichment program. The \$2 million will come from the Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

Last year, several members of the Southern California Congressional Delegation urged the House Committee on Appropriations to include a Justice Department earmark of \$2 million for LA's BEST. When the federal omnibus spending bill for fiscal year 2003 passed through Congress in early February, that \$2 million appropriation became reality.

"I am very pleased to announce today that LA's BEST, our signature after school program, will receive a \$2 million grant from the federal government," said Mayor Hahn, speaking in the school auditorium of Griffin Elementary School in Lincoln Heights. "Thanks to Congressman Becerra and our other Los Angeles representatives, LA's BEST will be able to continue providing unique and rewarding opportunities for children throughout Los Angeles."

Rep. Becerra, who played an instrumental role in shepherding the \$2 million earmark through the appropriations process, said, "LA's BEST continues to be an innovative model for curbing the disastrous influence drugs and gangs can have on our kids. It is my hope that cities all across this nation will continue to emulate this program. The federal government should give money to programs that work – and LA's BEST works."

"This support from the Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention is not only important because of the monetary resources it provides our program, but because of the message it sends," said Carla Sanger, President and CEO of LA's BEST. "This allocation of federal dollars underscores the importance of after school programs keeping our country's most vulnerable children safe from crime victimization and delinquency after school, in addition to supporting student achievement."

In September of 1988, the City of Los Angeles took a bold step outside of traditional city business to create an innovative after school program to address

the alarming rise in street gangs, school dropouts and drug use in communities where children lacked adequate adult supervision during the critical hours between 3 and 6 p.m. The program, called LA's BEST (Better Educated Students for Tomorrow), approaches inner-city children as resources to be developed, rather than problems to be solved. From its original 10 sites, LA's BEST has grown to serve over 18,000 students in 105 elementary schools throughout Los Angeles.

LA's BEST sites are targeted to reach the most economically distressed schools, and thus, the program provides a safe haven from the dangerous influences of gangs and drugs. According to the National Center for Juvenile Justice, children are at greater risk of being involved in crime during after-school hours. LA's BEST not only serves as a deterrent to drugs and gangs, it also provides children with an enriching environment that helps them succeed academically and socially. According to a study by the UCLA Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards and Student Testing, higher levels of participation in LA's BEST led to higher standardized test scores in math, reading and language arts.